DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 374 CS 213 829

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE Middle School Pupils Write Legends.
PUB DATE [93]
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Creative Writing; Grade 6; Intermediate Grades; *Legends; *Middle Schools; Student Reaction; *Teaching Methods; Units of Study; Writing Assignments
IDENTIFIERS Middle School Students; Trade Books

ABSTRACT

A sixth-grade student teacher developed and implemented a unit on creative writing, and one lesson in the unit on writing legends was particularly successful. A discussion of Davy Crockett and the legends surrounding his life, began the lesson. The student teacher then introduced trade books from the library station for the pupils to read. Discussion of the trade books brought out the distinction between tall tales (about fictitious people) and legends (concerning actual people). Pupils wrote legends based on historical figures they had just studied in a unit on colonization in the new world. Pupils began writing the legend in class and completed it for homework. All learners completed their legends in a reasonable duration of time. Each was eager to share a legend with others by reading the entire legend to classmates, telling salient points about legends, or posting the legends on a bulletin board. The student teacher stated that her pupils tended to like creative writing activities. (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marlow Ediger
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

ED357374

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

MIDDLE SCHOOL PUPILS WRITE LEGENDS

by Dr. Marlow Ediger, Professor of Education
Northeast Missouri State University, Kirksville

Creative writing is important to pupils. With creativity, learners express the unique, the novel, and the original. Creative behavior is needed from all in society. New problems in the societal arena require solutions which in many cases do not lean upon the tried and true traditional approaches. The old solutions have not worked and originality is needed. In addition to society needing new approaches to minimize problems or provide solutions to problematic situations, creative endeavors are also necessary for their own sake. Thus creativity emphasizes enjoyment and pleasure as learning opportunities for middle school pupils. The satisfaction of doing things in a different way as well as what harmonizes with one's own thinking stresses an integrated person. The learner and the curriculum become one and not separate entities.

Writing Legends

A sixth grade class taught by a student teacher (ST) supervised by the writer developed and implemented a well written unit on creative writing. One lesson in the unit of study stressed the writing of legends which was especially well done by the ST.

A large illustration on the bulletin board on Davy Crockett established set establishment for the writing of legends. Learners were asked to say what they recall from having read or heard about Davy Crockett. Each response given was recorded on the chalkboard by the ST.

The responses were numbered as given by pupils. No duplicates were to be given nor were any value judgments on any responses to be made by learners. Among others, the following were provided on Davy Crockett;

1. A popular song on Davy Crockett was heard on radio and sung by people a few years ago.

CS213829

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2. He was a scout on the frontier.

3. Crockett was elected to the US house of representatives.

4. He was opposed to President Andrew Jackson's policies on dealing with issues on Indians in frontier areas.

5. He was a well known soldier for his day.

There were approximately thirty statements given by middle school students on Davy Crockett. The ST continued the discussion by mentioning the legends that grew up around Davy Crockett. Crockett's fame and legend about being a good rifle-man centered around his report that he had shot 105 bears in nine months. One legend states that Crockett aimed his rifle at a raccoon in a tree. The raccoon replied, "Don't shoot ,Colonel, I'll come down. I know when I'm a gone coon." The ST continued by saying that Davy Crockett liked to tell folk tales about himself.

The ST read excerpts of stories told about Davy Crockett. One story told of the accuracy of Crockett's aim in shooting his rifle whereby a fly was shot off a person's nose from a distance of a mile. Pupils started to relate what they knew about legends. One told of George Washington chopping down the cherry tree. Two pupils felt this was a true story. A discussion then arose as to what makes for a legend. " An element of truth appears to be written inside of a legend," responded one pupil. Most agreed with this statement since Davy Crockett and George Washington were real people. A pupil growing up on a farm asked if the story of Abraham Lincoln helping a pig out of a mud hole when on the campaign trail was a true story. This learner said that pigs are very strong animals and their mud holes have very bad odors. Besides, if a pig cannot leave a mud hole by the self, the size thereof must be very large and deep. The pupil continued by saying that pigs he knew of never needed to be helped out of a mud hole. Many pupils in the class wondered about the condition of Lincoln's clothes for campaigning if he had helped the pig out of the mud hole. Another pupil whose father was a farmer stated that once pig's are wet, no one can hold on to the slippery hide. A lively discussion was certainly in evidence.

The ST then introduced trade books from the library station for pupils to read. The books included the life and times of Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, John Henry, Davy Crockett, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Johnny Appleseed. William Tell, King Arthur and the Roundtable, Robinhood and the Merry Men, Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill Hickok, Casey Jones, and Jim Bowie. Learners were challenged to read these books. It did not take long before twenty out of twenty-four pupil had selected a book from the library station. The ST assisted the other four pupils to choose a book to read by telling additional information about each to stimulate learner interest in reading. One indicated he would like to have a good reader read content orally to him. This good reader was a close friend who was highly accepting of people. The ST had previously set up a small tent for pupils to read in if they so desired. Another pupil had difficulty in word recognition and comprehension skills. She asked if there were related cassettes available with headphones for any of the trade books. This was available for Robinhood and the Merry Men. The ST mentioned she would cassette record in the evening two more books so the balance of the learners could all benefit from reading legends and other types of folklore. These two pupils seemingly were very appreciative of the ST's efforts.

The next day, fourteen pupils had completed the reading of their trade book. Questions were raised about Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill having been real live individuals initially. A criterion mentioned by the ST previously had been that initially the person was real to begin with and then supernatural traits were assigned to that individual, such as in the case of Davy Crockett with his long distance, accurate aim. A lively discussion followed on this topic. Ultimately, a distinction was made between tall tales (Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill as examples for which no data can be obtained as their ever having been actual human beings) and legends in which information can be located in diverse reference sources as to their reality (among others George Washington and Abraham Lincoln). Each pupil brought content into the discussion that emphasized what had been written in the trade book which fourteen learners had completed in reading.

Pupils desired to reveal information secured from reading their trade books. A variety of procedures were discussed with ST guidance. These ways to indicate content learned from reading included the following;

1. engaging in pantomime, creative dramatics, and formal dramatization.
2. making a movie set or a mural.
3. writing a summary of main ideas acquired.
4. outlining salient subject matter from the trade book read.
5. pencil sketching main ideas read.
6. sharing observations in a committee setting pertaining to acquired content.
7. reporting to the class why the trade book read was a legend or a tall tale.

The ST , in sequence, discussed with middle school students the writing of a legend. The discussion centered in on what makes for a legend. Through brainstorming, learners with ST guidance emphasized that a real, actual person is involved. This person due to fame has qualities placed upon him or her that stress the supernatural or the unusual in deeds performed. Pupils and the ST gave examples of a legend that developed in time. One pupil gave a very good example using the life and times of Thomas Jefferson. In a nut shell, Thomas Jefferson was so decent and kind that he never offended anyone during his life-time. Thus at his death, Jefferson was proclaimed as the person who never wronged a person.

The class had studied many personalities in a historical unit just completed, entitled Colonization in the New World. In this unit, pupils had studied about Captain John Smith, William Bradford, Cotton Mather, Roger Williams, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Paul Revere, John Hancock, and Alexander Hamilton, among others. Individual pupils selected which person from the above listed on the chalkboard they would wish to write a legend about. The first pupil that volunteered to write about that person would have his or her choice. Thus one pupil per name listed would write the legend. If a pupil would

rather write a legend on a different person than those listed on the chalkboard, he or she should discuss this with the ST. The latter alternative worked quite well since four pupils chose their own famous character in the writing of a legend. These four chose John Adams, John Paul Jones, Increase Mather, and Anne Hutchison. Pupils were challenged to write part of the legend in class and do the rest as homework. Learners were quite agreeable to this plan. Progress reports were given the next day to the other members in the class. One day later, eight legends had been completed. One learner, in a nutshell, wrote abut Roger Williams who became governor of all the thirteen original colonies and after the Declaration of Independence was president of the United States together with George Washington. Roger Williams lived a long time indeed! He also owned many taverns and did a considerable amount of gambling to pay for debts in land speculation. Williams became the wealthiest man of all time due to scientific methods of playing the odds in gambling. The middle school pupil who wrote this legend on Roger Williams was a top student in class. One more example in the writing of legends pertains to Bill who selected the biography of Paul Revere. In a highly condensed version of the pupil's writing, Paul Revere became a leader in the business world. He foresaw the coming of space stations, computers, and the modern automobile. Revere's writings and models found just recently indicate he could have implemented the use of these innovations as well as felt at home in the 1990's in the world of technology.

In Closing

Writing legends can be a highly enjoyable experience for middle school pupils. All learners in class completed their legends in a reasonable duration of time. Each was eager to share their legend with others. Sharing was done in the following ways;

1. reading the entire product to classmates. A few were read each day.
2. telling salient points about their legends.

3. posting papers as they were completed on the bulletin board as well as on the hallway walls adjacent to the classroom.

Middle school pupils are and can be quite creative in their endeavors. The cooperating teacher mentioned to the writer that her pupils tended to like creative writing activities, but that these pupils needed to be properly motivated to learn. All learning tends to be motivated so that an adequate amount of energy is available for doing, producing, and developing.